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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 YEREVAN 000793

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SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER READOUT OF NEW YORK MEETINGS WITH TURKEY AND AZERBAIJAN

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Classified By: Amb. Marie L. Yovanovitch, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: FM Nalbandian briefed ambassador on his and President Sargsian's meetings in New York on the UNGA margins. He said the Turkey, Azerbaijan, Armenia trilateral had been successful symbolically, but light on substance. Nalbandian complained about Azerbaijani FM Mammadyarov's UNGA speech in which he said the 2008 UNGA resolution (based on territorial integrity) must be the basis for Minsk Group negotiations. He was more positive on the Minsk Group-sponsored meetings, and was encouraged President Aliyev ready to meet immediately after Azerbaijani election. He reported that Aliyev and Sargsian would next meet in Moscow, with President Medvedev, per Aliyev's request. Russian FM Lavrov will visit Armenia October 2-3; the French separately reported a planned Medvedev visit here for late October. Nalbandian reserved a detailed Turkey discussion for a one-on-one meeting which followed, reported by separate channel. END SUMMARY

¶2. (C) A GOOD VISIT: FM Nalbandian was generally upbeat in his portrayal of the New York meetings to Ambassador and PolChief. President Sargsian and Nalbandian apparently were pleased overall by the visit, which featured good substance as well as favorable public diplomacy. Sargsian was pleased with his meeting with Secretary Rice (septel will report Iran readout from that meeting). Sargsian and Nalbandian were also delighted by the glittery dinner hosted for them by the NY-based Armenian-American community -- an event which drew some 800 prominent Armenian-Americans to a New York restuarant.

¶3. (C) TURKS TRUMP CSTO: Nalbandian met with FM Babacan on September 26, which is reported by separate channel. He then met trilaterally with his Turkish and Azerbaijani counterparts for twenty minutes. He said the meeting was not substantive and did not cover Nagorno Karabakh. Nalbandian noted it was important for Turkey to be seen hosting an event for the three FMs and he was happy to cooperate in giving Turkey that photo op. He remarked that the trilateral meeting made him late to the CSTO foreign ministers' lunch, of which he himself was host, given Armenia's CSTO chairmanship. Nalbandian delighted in reiterating that while he had agreed instantly to Turkish FM Babacan's proposal for the meeting, Azerbaijani FM Mammadyarov had reportedly had to seek permission from his president.

¶4. (C) IRAN COPIES TURKISH IDEA: Nalbandian said Armenia had welcomed Turkey's regional stability platform idea because "any idea to improve regional stability and cooperation, we are for." He reported, however, that Iran has recently sent its own overtures about wanting to broker an Iranian-led regional stability grouping, which would exclude Turkey but include Russia and the three South Caucasus countries. Nalbandian felt that these dueling proposals were each impractical in the near term, given the reality of regional

relationships.

15. (C) DIASPORA UPSET ABOUT TURKEY OVERTURE: Nalbandian noted, however, that despite the otherwise warm reception from the Armenian-American Diaspora, the president had experienced some deeply skeptical questioning from his Armenian-American hosts about his overtures to Turkey and the idea of a historical commission to probe the "genocide" question. Ambassador asked if Sargsian was able to explain to his interlocutors in that community Armenia's need to normalize relations with Turkey. Nalbandian responded that some do understand, but the majority do not at all. He said that most in that community remain entirely seized with the genocide issue and are hostile to any Armenian government outreach to Turkey that is not pre-conditioned on Turkish acknowledgement of genocide. Nalbandian said that even many intelligent, thoughtful Armenian-Americans were unable to "change their mentality" about Turkey.

16. (C) NAGORNO-KARABAKH TALKS: The Foreign Minister thought the Minsk Group talks in New York had been generally constructive. He said the two sides had agreed on the importance of moving forward with negotiations, and that the presidents had agreed to meet after the Azerbaijani elections -- President Aliyev was apparently ready to meet immediately after the election, not even waiting for his re-inauguration. Nalbandian said he had told Mammadyarov to "stop the propaganda," and that opening up bilateral economic cooperation between Armenia and Azerbaijan could improve local attitudes toward a settlement. He said that the Azerbaijanis are rigid and stuck in their old thinking. He hoped that the Georgia crisis would nonetheless galvanize "positive changes" to the negotiating climate.

17. (C) NEXT SARGSIAN-ALIYEV MEETING: Nalbandian hinted that

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the Armenians might wait for the next presidents' meeting until after Aliyev's second inauguration, because Aliyev had refused to meet Serzh Sargsian as president-elect. Nalbandian then backpedaled, and said probably the Armenian side would be willing to meet as early as Aliyev wishes. Nalbandian joked that in some countries a sitting president could not make appointments for after the election, but in Azerbaijan there is no such problem given that there is no doubt about the outcome. (COMMENT: The minister apparently is not attuned to his own administration's glass house, to be casting such stones. END COMMENT)

18. (C) MEDVEDEV TO HOST NK TALKS IN MOSCOW: Nalbandian reported that Russian President Medvedev had invited Presidents Sargsian and Aliyev to Moscow for their next round of NK discussions. He said that Russian NK envoy Yuri Merzlyakov had conveyed this invitation to the two sides during the larger Minsk Group discussion. Nalbandian understood that this had first been suggested by President Aliyev. He said that Armenia would of course agree to this meeting, so long as the co-chair countries were all supportive. He said that the Armenian president was ready to meet his counterpart at any opportunity. The Ambassador asked what Nalbandian thought would be accomplished by the Moscow meetings. Nalbandian replied that he expected a road map for the way forward in Minsk Group negotiations, and instructions from the two presidents to their foreign ministers on how to proceed.

19. (C) LAVROV (AND MEDVEDEV?) TO VISIT YEREVAN: Nalbandian said that Russian FM Sergei Lavrov would visit Armenian October 2-3, apparently to preview the Moscow NK talks. Meanwhile, polchief chatted with French Ambassador Smessow outside Nalbandian's office, while U.S. Ambassador conducted a tete-a-tete with Nalbandian. Smessow asserted with great confidence that Medvedev himself will visit Yerevan by the end of October. He repeated that assertion to DCM at dinner later that evening. Smessow did not disclose the source of his information, though Nalbandian has exceptionally close

ties to the French government after his many years as ambassador there. Nalbandian himself did not breathe a word of a Medvedev visit to us, which would have been natural to mention in the context of the Lavrov visit, which he characterized as "routine."

YOVANOVITCH